

Approved

TOWN OF WESTFORD
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
MINUTES

DATE: February 11, 2003

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: J.V. Fletcher Library

PRESENT: Dini Healy-Coffin, Chris Romeo, Robert McCusker,
Robert Jefferies, Allan Loiselle

ABSENT: Steve Ledoux-Town Manager

OTHERS

PRESENT: Norman Khumalo-Assistant Town Manager/
Land Use Planning

Open Forum

The Boy Scouts from Troop 95 observed the meeting as part of their citizenship badge.

McCusker reported that he has accepted an appointment with the U.S. State Department and would not be seeking a second term. McCusker stated that due to obligations in Washington, D.C. this would be his last Selectmen's meeting. McCusker thanked the Board and his supporters. The Board thanked McCusker and congratulated him on his appointment.

Ellen Rainville, Library Director, Veronica Whitehouse, Library Trustee, and Jean Shaw, Friends of the Library, updated the Board on the recent fundraising efforts to keep the library open on Sundays. The Library Trustees accepted the gift from the Friends of the Library. One gift to the library is an adult program of a reading of Poe's Telltale Heart on Wednesday, February 19, 2003 at 7:00 p.m.

Paul Murray, American Legion Post 159, reported that the Blue Star Banner Program is being restarted for Westford residents with sons, daughters, wives or husbands serving on active duty. The Post will furnish the banners. The Post is currently working to get a list of those individuals on active duty. Interested parties should contact the American Legion Post 159 or the Veteran's Office.

Paul Murray announced that the Graniteville Monument Committee has been reformed with fundraising efforts underway to update the monument with veterans' names from the Korean War through the Gulf War.

Public Hearing – Massachusetts Electric – Pole Hearing – Nutting Road

Healy-Coffin opened the public hearing. A representative from Massachusetts Electric was present seeking permission to place one (1) pole (51/57-84) on Nutting Road for the new three phase construction on Nutting Road. The new pole required will minimize the amount of tree trimming in the area and allow support for a gradual bend in the road. McCusker was concerned with the wires crossing Nutting Road. Robert Priestly, 24 Nutting Road, stated that there are no power lines from Pole 51 to Pole 53 only telephone and cable. Priestly asked for specific information regarding the plans. Chris Radzick, Engineer for Massachusetts Electric, stated that the new pole will close the span from the poles. The new pole is part of the Westford 57 Substation project needed to keep up with the growth in Westford. Radzick indicated that the street light will remain on Pole 53. Priestly asked that no street lights be placed on Pole 51½ as the light will shine into his bedroom. Radzick stated that there would be no street light on Pole 51½. It was moved by McCusker, seconded by Romeo, and VOTED UNANIMOUSLY, to approve the pole location without a street light.

Presentation of Financial Statements for FY02

Suzanne Marchand, Finance Director, was present to update the Board on the recent Management Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended June 30, 2002, as prepared by the Town's auditors Melanson Heath & Company, PC. Marchand thanked the Town Treasurer, the Town Accountant and staff for the improvement to the Town finances. The auditors wrote that they found the condition of the Town's accounting records to be substantially improved in fiscal year 2002. Marchand stated that some of the recommendations made by the auditors have already been implemented. Romeo asked for a clarification of the recommendation to reconcile the Police detail funds. Marchand stated that she is working with the Police Chief on this matter. The Police Department does the billing for outside details and the receipts are posted to the general ledger. Marchand indicated that the Police Department is working to provide the exact outstanding balances on a monthly basis. Romeo recommended an independent audit be done regarding the school cash accounts. Marchand reported that she has written to all banks involved in the school cash accounts using the Town's federal tax identification number. Marchand will be contacting the individual accounts to close the accounts out.

Healy-Coffin announced that Ledoux will be presenting the budget on Thursday, February 13, 2003 at 7:00 p.m. at a joint meeting with the Finance Committee.

Discussion of Traffic Supervisor Policies

Traffic Safety Statistics – Robert Welch, Police Chief, was present to address the issue of school crossing guards. Welch reported that the Police Department has expended \$16,000 this year for school crossing guards. Welch also reported that there are two crossing guards that are covering three separate schools for a total of approximately 10 children. Welch pointed out that the Board directed him to not refill the crossing guard positions. The Board and Welch discussed the alternative of having the children picked up by a school bus. The Board and Welch also discussed the need for budget cuts. Healy-Coffin stated that she was watching the School Committee meeting recently and believed that they were not aware of the crossing guards. Healy-Coffin also reported that buses are being cut back so that there may be more students walking to school. Welch stated that the cost per student in relation to the crossing guards is approximately \$4,000. Welch assured the Board that the safety of the community and students was top priority but felt that the money could be better spent elsewhere. Loisel recommended that the Board review the details of the plan presented by Welch last year regarding crossing guards and get input from the School Committee. Healy-Coffin recalled that the Board's policy was that the crossing guard positions would not be refilled through attrition and that the buses would pick up the students. Welch indicated that he would put a crossing guard where needed most. It was moved by Romeo, seconded by Loisel, and VOTED UNANIMOUSLY, to table this matter to allow the Board to send a letter to the School Committee to get feedback on the crossing guard issue. To be readdressed by the Board at the February 25th meeting.

Police Office, Route 495, Exit 32 – Welch recommended discontinuing the use of an officer at this location. Welch stated that there is money in the State budget that was earmarked for a traffic signal. Welch felt that since this is a State road the State should be fixing the problem. Welch stated that he is using a patrol car for this situation and is currently short-handed due to injury, attendance at the police academy, etc. Welch asked the Board to rescind the policy of having an officer on duty at exit 32. It was moved by Loisel, seconded by McCusker, and VOTED UNANIMOUSLY, to change the policy that the Police Department will no longer provide a patrol officer to direct traffic on Boston Road at the on and off ramps of Route 495 and that the Board revisit this matter in 6 months. Romeo asked Loisel to amend his motion to include that the Board send a letter to Senator Panagiotakos and Representative Hall explaining the Board's position that this needs to be covered by State Police or some other designee at the State's expense because this issue is caused by traffic from a state highway. Loisel included Romeo's amendment to the motion.

Scott Dean, Constable Appointment – Welch indicated there was no objection on the part of the Police Department regarding this appointment.

League of Women Voters – Traffic Report – Lynn Cohen, League of Women Voters, asked the Board to review the report prepared as a result of the traffic forum held on January 11, 2003. The report to be posted on the League of Women Voter's website.

Request from Water Department to fill Administrative Secretary Position

Robin Fulford, Water Department Business Manager, requested that the Board lift the hiring freeze for the vacated position of Administrative Secretary. Fulford stated that the position handles the billing, water receipts, computer work, meters and customer service. Healy-Coffin reported that Ledoux and Chris Liebke, Human Resources Director, recommended advertising the position within the system for an internal candidate. If no candidate is found, Fulford is to come back to Ledoux to revisit the matter. Ledoux was concerned with the head count for fiscal year 2004. It was moved by Jefferies, seconded by Romeo, and VOTED UNANIMOUSLY, to allow the Water Department to advertise internally for this position.

Licenses and Permits

Newton Oriental Rugs Auction – Itzhak Levi Auctioneer, Custom Liquidators, at Westford Regency April 6, 2003 – It was moved by Jefferies, seconded by Loiselle, to approve. Romeo pointed out that the license for Mike Sokolowski, 83 Arnold Road, Newton has been altered. Romeo urged the Board to defeat the motion and have Levi and Sokolowski come before the Board to explain why two years in a row they have provided expired or altered licenses. Jefferies pointed out that Levi's license appears to be in order. Jefferies withdrew his motion. It was moved by Romeo, seconded by McCusker, and VOTED UNANIMOUSLY, that the Board not issue a license to Levi, Sokolowski or Custom Liquidators of America, Inc., d/b/a Newton Oriental Rugs until they come before the Board to explain this discrepancy.

St. Catherine of Alexandria Church, One-day License for Quiz Night, March 1, 2003 – It was moved by Jefferies, seconded by Loiselle, and VOTED UNANIMOUSLY, to approve.

Appointments

Barbara Greenslade, Cemetery Commission – It was moved by Romeo, seconded by McCusker, and VOTED UNANIMOUSLY, to appoint Barbara Greenslade to the Cemetery Commission.

Scott Dean, Constable – Scott Dean distributed an updated resume to the Board. Chief Welch had reported earlier in the meeting the Department's support of this appointment. It was moved by Jefferies, seconded by McCusker, and VOTED UNANIMOUSLY, to appoint Scott Dean as Constable.

Ellen Harde, Election Officer – It was moved by Jefferies, seconded by Romeo, and VOTED UNANIMOUSLY, to reappoint Ellen Harde, Election Officer. Jefferies asked if an elected official can work the elections. Khumalo to review.

Franklin Property

No report at this time.

Brookside Mill

Healy-Coffin reported that Gerry Boucher and his new partner will be signing an agreement this month and will provide a copy of the agreement to the Board. Romeo asked that Boucher or his representative be invited to a meeting to explain exactly what his plans are, i.e., condominiums or apartments, financing, etc. Romeo felt that the neighbors needed an explanation. Khumalo stated that he has been participating in the meetings with Boucher and they discussed arranging a date to come before the Board. Romeo stated that neighbors are calling seeking information. Healy-Coffin stated that Boucher has been in touch with some of the neighbors. Healy-Coffin stated that she would review the agenda and set a date.

Minutes

It was moved by Loiselle, seconded by Romeo, and VOTED 4 IN FAVOR WITH 1 ABSTAINING (McCusker), to approve the minutes of January 7, 2003.

It was moved by Loiselle, seconded by Jefferies, and VOTED 4 IN FAVOR WITH 1 ABSTAINING (Romeo), to approve the minutes of January 14, 2003.

Board Reports/Updates

None at this time.

Old Business/New Business

Request from Conservation Commission for use of Conservation Commission receipts from Reserve Fund – Healy-Coffin referenced a letter from Bill Turner requesting the Board approve the use of the Conservation Commission Receipts Reserved Funds in relation to two projects: \$5,000 for review of the proposed Route 225 Bypass Road in relation to the requirements of Section 10:53(3) of the Wetlands Protection Act and; \$1,500 to pay for the creation of a bathymetric map of Lake Nabnasset as part of the ongoing effort to address concerns regarding nuisance plant growth in the lake. It was moved by Romeo, seconded by McCusker, and VOTED 4 IN FAVOR WITH 1 ABSTAINING (Loiselle), to approve.

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Correspondence

Healy-Coffin read the list of correspondence.

2.6 Letter from Aaron Shenkin, 69 Forrest Road re: hunting permits. Loiselle reminded the Board and the audience that bow hunting is allowed in Westford.

Open Items

2/11-1 Khumalo to review whether an elected official can work the elections.

2/11-2 Ledoux to send letter to School Committee for input re: crossing guard issue.

2/11-3 Ledoux to put crossing guard matter on 2/25 agenda.

2/11-4 Healy-Coffin to review agenda and set date for Boucher to come before the Board to provide update on Brookside Mill.

2/11-5 Ledoux to invite Itzhak Levi and Mike Sokolowski re: auctioneer license to a meeting to explain discrepancies in their licenses.

Adjournment

It was moved by Jefferies, seconded by Romeo, and VOTED UNANIMOUSLY, to adjourn the meeting.

Steve Ledoux, Town Manager

Dini Healy-Coffin, Chairman